

THE DEAD LINE.

(Continued from page 2.)

as if you'd been at work all the time! What a droll girl you are, Kate." And he enjoyed the medicine of another hearty laugh. "Just as if you had been at work!" Kate joined in the laughter, though she saw nothing to laugh at. She laughed from sympathy.

"Well, then, you have got to do this. If you refuse I'll leave the house and the country this minute. You shall go to college, now. So listen to this proposition. When you get through college, and get to be a great somebody like I dreamed you had become, you will have money. Lots of money. I am willing to bet all I have that you will pick up a fortune easily, once you get through college."

Kate's eyes fairly danced at the prospect of future greatness. He had touched the right chord at last. He saw his advantage and pursued it.

"Now, listen," he continued. "We draw up and sign a binding written agreement to this effect, to-wit: That I am to advance you a certain sum now—say \$250—and thereafter, quarterly, such sums as you may need, until six months after you shall have graduated at any college you may choose to attend; and five years after that date, you promise to repay the aggregate amount, with 6 per cent. interest, to my order. Although you are a minor, a contract for such a purpose will be binding. Besides, you will not care for that. You would consider yourself bound anyhow, no matter about the law."

"I would so love to go to college," said Kate. "You will wait for me to ask father about it before I agree?"

"Of course, my dear girl. We'll go together and ask him."

"No, no," exclaimed Kate. "Remember your last buggy ride."

"That's so," said he. "But I shall have to ride once in a while yet, I suppose, nevertheless. We'll go together, Kate. I wish to meet your folks anyhow. But (putting his finger to his lips suggestively)—don't tell them—don't tell anybody—I am an ex-convict, Kate. Not many people would look at it as you do. It would ruin me were it known. Everybody would regard me with horror. Society always punishes the victim of injustice—rarely the other man. Besides, what would people say about you were it known that an old ex-convict had lent you the money with which to go to college? Imagine what Mrs. Carlington's set would say should they hear that you were out riding with an old resident of Sing Sing! I hardly think even your own folks would look upon it as just the thing. Let that be our secret, Kate. Not a word to anybody on earth."

"I can keep a secret," said Kate. "You needn't have any fear of my telling it."

In truth, Kate had a very clear perception of how even her father would regard the matter, and she began to dread that it might in some way be discovered.

The old man was weary with his long conversation, and the feelings it had stirred; he soon fell asleep. Kate, full of hopes and fears on the verge of the new life so suddenly opening before her, sat motionless a long time at the sleeper's bedside. Suddenly a suspicion flashed into her mind. Was the story she had just heard from the old man's lips true? She recalled the quiet dignity of his manner, and the language he had employed. He was certainly no ordinary man, like those she had been used to meet. She knew none with so gentlemanly an air. Had he really been a convict?—and for twenty-two years? Besides, what had he been before he went into the army? Had he been a doctor, living in fine style in a city, like Dr. Carlington? Perhaps he had been a lawyer, for he spoke of having wished to manage his own defense in court. But—he spoke of going to "the farm" to seek his family! Was he really rich, or was all he had offered her mere empty talk? After awhile, she thought of a singular omission which seemed to leave the Sing Sing story incomplete; and she resolved that when opportunity afforded she would ask him about it. Had he no parents, no brothers nor sisters? And why did he not, while in prison, write to them? But the patient slept most of the time all day; and night coming on, the

other nurse took her place, and Kate retired.

Reading was out of the question, so full was her mind of hopes and fears. She slept, to dream she was in prison for life; that she was about to be hanged; that she was at college; that she was making a speech and somebody cried out something about a Sing Sing convict. But sweet sixteen, in good health, can overcome the nightmare and sleep sound, dreamless sleep; and so Kate slept at last.

(To be continued.)

Wife and Mother Suicides.

A melancholy story was related at the inquest held Friday morning upon the remains of Mrs. Annie Poon, who committed suicide at her home at 166 Barber street Thursday to escape starvation.

When Deputy Coroner McHale called at the tenement, says the News reporter, he found the remains of the unfortunate woman lying on the floor of a dingy little room, surrounded by burning candles. A black robe was thrown over the body, in conformity with the Hebrew funeral customs. The three little rooms occupied by the family were in wild disorder and a motley crowd surrounded the building, trying to catch a glimpse of the suicide. A woman bearing the traces of care and want sat near the window, rocking to and fro on the only chair the room afforded, with a young child in her arms. Near by stood the husband of the dead woman, careworn and haggard, looking as though he, too, wished the struggle for existence was over.

The deputy coroner made a hurried examination of the premises and found there was no room in which the six jurors necessary for the inquest could be seated. Accordingly, when the jury had viewed the remains the coroner selected a beer hall a few doors away as a place where the inquest could be held. The investigation was short but it brought out a story of privation and suffering which sounded more terrible when heard amid the clinking of beer glasses at the bar, where several men were drinking and carousing, all unmindful of the tale of the sorrowful side of life being related behind a screen a few feet away.

When Poon, the husband, was called he told how, after being out in search of employment Thursday afternoon, he returned to find the house locked up and apparently deserted. Upon gaining an entrance he found his wife's body hanging from a lamp-hook in the ceiling.

Before taking her life Mrs. Poon had rocked her infant to sleep and it lay, still sleeping, a few feet away. He had been out of work for three months, he said, and when last employed was a clothing salesman. After losing his position he had tried to eke out an existence for his family in many different ways but had not succeeded.

His wife had been ill for months, the rent was due, but the money was not forthcoming and the landlord threatened eviction. Starvation stared them in the face. Yesterday she sent the child to purchase some rat poison for her, but the grocer, surmising the use Mrs. Poon had for the poison, sent her a package of powdered sugar and flour mixed. Whether she learned the nature of the supposed poison no one knows, but later she went to a neighboring store and purchased the clothes-line with which she hanged herself.—Chicago Express, Dec. 30.

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